Hamit Bozarslan

„WHY THE ARMED STRUGGLE?“ UNDERSTANDING THE VIOLENCE IN KURDISTAN OF TURKEY

Introduction

Twice, since the end of the Ottoman Empire, the „violence“ has emerged as the major element of the shaping of the Kurdish movement, and, consequently, of the Kurdish political arena in Turkey as a whole: during 1920-1938 and during the period which began in the second part of the 1970s and which continues as a guerrilla warfare since 1984[1].

The permanence of this feature does not, however, mean that the sociology of the Kurdish movement has remained unchanged since 1920s. One can, in fact, barely suggest a continuum between the Kurdish insurrections of 1920s and 1930s and the violence of 1970s, 1980s and 1990s[2]. During the Kurdish insurrections of 1920s and 1930s, the modes of rural contest were dominant in the Kurdish movement; the tribes and religious brotherhood supplied the main human resources of the opposition against the Kemalist government. These structures refused to legitimize the Turkish State not because it was Turkish but because it was State. Still their massif refusal reinforced the position of the Kurdish nationalist intellectuals and military officers, who rejected the state not because it was state but because it was Turkish. Nationalist claims and defense of the rural Kurdish social organization went hand-in-hand, their convergence explaining the frequency and the strength of the Kurdish revolts of 1920s and 1930s.

The situation during the period of the 1970s-1990s is, both militarily and sociologically speaking, radically different. Concerning the military level one can observe that political violence and guerrilla warfare, and, not insurrections have been the dominant modes of action of this period. On the sociological level, the Kurdish movement is hitherto a largely urbanized one, able to mobilize city populations, which have essentially remained silent during the previous periods. It is also capable of formulating, together with its specific nationalist program, new political, cultural and/or socio-economic claims like equality, economic welfare, socialism or justice linked to an islamist discourse.

These radical changes make clear that the link between the Kurdish movement and violence in Turkey should be understood as a constantly changing research subject and not as the repetition of the „same old story“. However, this observation does not provide answers to the following questions: why, violence *lato sensu* - i.e., as rebellion, sporadic civil and political mass violence, targeted terror actions or guerrilla warfare-, remains the principal feature of the Kurdish movement? Why, in spite of the heavy causalities, were thousands of people willing or still are to fight within the ranks of the PKK? Why has Kurdish nationalism in Turkey failed from 1970s up to now, in giving priority to other means of actions such as forms of passive and civil resistance? Why legal political initiatives, as those undertaken by HEP, DEP and HADEP, three successive Kurdish dominated parties[3], obtained so little success? Are radicalism and violence the necessary components or consequences of minority nationalism or, on the contrary, should they be explained in the light of wider power relations and political processes?

The blunt reality is that, in spite of some rich perspectives they suggest, the theories of violence, as well as those on the nationalism, offer only weak answers to these questions. The current studies on the Kurdish field are not of greater help. In fact, only long-term sociological investigations, leading to the prosopographic profiles of the Kurdish actors as well as to the local and regional monographs can answer these questions. Additionally, it seems necessary to analyze the context and the decision-making processes that cause an actor to turn to violent means, the moments when a militant or a group effectively decide to join an armed struggle, etc.. The material conditions of the „research-field“ do not yet allow us to undertake such vast investigations.

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1 For the reasons that I will not analyse here (as the heavy cost of the revol. ts of 1925-1938 period, the Second World War and the adoption of the victory of the Democratic Party in 1950 which made possible some degree of integration of the Kurdish notables), the 1940s and 1950s can be defined as the „period of silence“ of the Kurdish movement in Turkey. The revival of the Kurdish nationalism in 1960s is mainly pacific.

2 D. McDowell: *A Modern History of the Kurds*, London, 1995.

3 A few dozens of members and a deputy of HEP (Labour Party of People) and DEP (Democracy Party) have been killed by „death-squadrons“. Both parties have been banished by the Constitutional Court. HADEP (Democracy Party of People) is still legal, but under heavy military pressure and risks also to be banished by the Constitutional Court.

Bearing in mind this major obstacle, I will propose in this article only some hypothesis to understand the singular place that violence as a general phenomenon – and not as specific forms of behaviors[4] – occupies in the Turkish Kurdistan. In the first part of the article, I will suggest that the violence obeys to some structural factors, that can be explained by the nature of the state and the power relations in Turkey. Further on, I will argue that, although it might be misleading to consider the „ideological commitments" as permanent obstacles before the social and political processes and changes, one should also admit that they play a decisive role in the constant reproduction of violence in Turkey. In the second part of the article I will suggest that the Kurdish answers to the political system are largely determined by the nature of the state and the power relations in Turkey, but, at the same time, some of the specific features of the Kurdish movement prevent it from moving towards non-violent modes of action. In the last part, I will analyze the impact of the regional dimension of the Kurdish problem on the issue of violence. Concluding, I will emphasize the necessity of the enlargement of the Turkish political space by integrating the Kurdish actors as the sine qua non condition of, if not the end, at least the decrease of the violence.

Explaining violence by structures and actors' strategies, as I will tempt to do in this article, does not mean to underestimate the historical legacy and patterns of revolts which dominated the Kurdish, inhabited areas during the last century of the Ottoman Empire. But these patterns were a part of what Serif Mardin describes as a tacit contract[5] between the „ruler" and its „subjects", between the „Center" and its periphery. In the context of this tacit contract, the „rebellion" was accepted as a substitute to the right of resistance of local entities and as a mean of regulation of the relations between „Center" and „peripheries". This pattern of relations with the local entities explains the low level of the State coercion and the possibility of „compensation" or some kinds of sultanal „award" after the repression the Kurdish revolts during the Ottoman period.

One last point needs to be emphasized before analyzing the structures behind the violence of today. It is obvious that the revolts of the pre-republican period, and probably in a more radical manner, the revolts of the Kemalist period (1920s and 1930s) gave birth to a tradition of armed struggle among the Kurds. They have also contributed strongly to the formation of the collective memory of the Kurdish community in this country. The Kurdish revolts in Iraq and in Iran have also contributed to the formation of this memory, and, to some extent, to the emergence of the Kurdish armed groups. However, it is also clear that tradition and a collective memory do not automatically lead to an armed struggle. They are definitely part of the culture and elements of the Kurdish symbolic environment. Far from engendering per se a violent contest, they are mobilized but in the conditions of an already commenced conflict and help to legitimize it *a posteriori*[6]. My assertion, developed elsewhere, is that culture, traditions, collective memory etc. are elements of an environment, either producing the violence or being produced by it and, as such, cannot be substituted to the structural elements behind violent modes of action[7].

1. States' coercion as a constant source of violence

The States „Official Doctrine"

Do ideological commitments or doctrinal and securitarian obsessions give birth to political structures? In the Turkish case, at least, the answer seems to be affirmative. In fact, the observation of the Turkish political arena since the adoption of the political pluralism in 1946 shows that Mustafa Kemal, the „founding father" of the Republic, as well as the „founding principles" attributed to him, are transformed into an almost „metaphysical" system and figure as such in the Turkish Constitution[8]. The „Atatürkism" as the Constitution defines it, is central for both the state doctrine and official „syntax" of the power in Turkey. The military is designated by this very Constitution as the protector of the „internal security". As such, Kemalism, or rather, neo-kemalism as it is „constructed" by some intellectuals during 1960s, constitutes a real ideological mortgage on the Turkish political system and determines the evolution of the Kurdish question in this country.

This constitutionally institutionalized mortgage of „Kemalism" on the Turkish political arena explains, at least partly, the singularity and the paradox of the „Turkish Democracy" in the Middle East. On the one hand, this „Democracy" accepts to legitimize some political actors as „integrated oppositions" of the powers (liberal/conservative parties and social-democratic parties, radical-right, during some periods, islamist movement). On the other hand, however, it constantly excludes some groups that it considers as threats to the „nation" or to its

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4 For instance as suicides, suicide- bomb attacks, fighting with the security forces etc.

5 S. Mardin: *Makalaler*, Istanbul, 4 vols, 1990-1992.

6 See reflections on the weakness of relations between violence and culture in the Bask country: M. Wieviorka: *E.T.A. et la violence politique au Pays-Basque espagnol*, Geneva, 1993, p. 8.

7 H. Bozarslan: „Coercition et violence au Kurdistan", in: H.-L. Kieser (ed): *Kurdistan und Europa. Einblicke in die kurdische Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Zürich: Chronos, 1997, pp. 57-76; H. Bozarslan & C. Jolly: „Violences et politique: Turquie, Égypte, Algérie", in: *Cahiers de l'Orient*, no. 45, 1997, pp. 7-22.

8 T. Parla: *Türkiye'de Anaysalar*, Istanbul, 1989; H. Bozarslan: „Political Crisis and Kurdish Issue in Turkey", in: R. Olson (ed): *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement and Its impact on the Middle East in the 1990's*, Lexington, Kentucky, 1996, pp. 135-153.

founding elements[9]: the Kurds (the major linguistically distinct non-Turkish group), the Alevis (the major non-Sunni group, i.e. a group which does not belong to the par defeat State's religion) and during some periods, the Islamists (who, while accepting Turcity and Islam, contest the right to the state and to the „integrated" political actors, to monopolize the religious references as an instrument of legitimization). During the decades following the foundation of the Turkish Republic, those allegiances were declared as hostile to the State and to the Nation. Since 1960s, successive doctrines of civil war (disguised as „counter-insurgency strategy" or „law intensity conflicts"), re-designated these groups as the „enemies" of the Republic. The „protection" of the „order", of the „Kemalist regime", or of the „*patrie en danger*", requiring coercion, including death squadrons are thus legitimized as the unavoidable price that the society has to pay for its security or for conformity of social order to the „Atatürkism" .

Beyond the Doctrine: Conflict and Internal War as „Profit Making"

However, one should not consider these doctrines as disposing an essence or a material existence by themselves. The doctrines are „deified" because there are actors who have some kind of interest in their „deification". Turkey, is in no way an exception. If „Kemalism" remains the official state doctrine - and is reinforced since a couple of years -, the reason is to be sought in the presence of certain actors who use it as an instrument of legitimization for their positions in power relations. The army is the major of those actors for whom „Kemalism" - with its successive interpretations given by different generations of high-ranking officers -, plays the role of the *assabiyya* or *ésprit de corps*. One of the country's major economic forces, the military is also in charge of the „conformity" of the political arena to the Constitution and to „Kemalism". The military-dominated non-elected National Security Council proposes the major „political orientations" that the government „is obliged to discuss in priority". The Constitutional Court, the State's Security courts, the functionarised high-ranking bureaucrats, university rectors that Ernest Gellner once called the „*ulema* of Kemalism"[10] and some newspapers editorialists... constitute other components of power structures. These organs or groups, of which some are fused with the radical-right are widely used as regime's legitimizing force, its security and/or juridical apparatus. The „political actors", namely conservative/liberal parties and social-democratic/left parties, have been for years minor actors of decision-making processes of the country, conducting the policies „advised" by the National Security Council. This military-bureaucratic „complex" is reinforced in the Kurdish areas by the organs such the „Prefecture of Zone of Exception" or the „Special War Bureau" which has at its disposal some 23.000 „Special Teams" called the „Nindjas", used also as death-squadrons[11].

The emotionally significant theme of defending the „integrity" of „national territory" allows these power structures to obtain some degree of legitimacy among the Turkish-Sunni population. But, the control of the political space and the coercion, which is linked to it, does not only serve the „state building" or the „nation-building" processes through a constant mobilization of the „national resources". Nor do they bring only symbolic prestige and advantages for the high-ranking military officers and civil bureaucrats. The „internal" war - against „Kurdish nationalism", but also against „the communist threat" or, more and more against the so-called „religious reaction" (irtica) or simply „reaction" (gericilik) - is mainly an instrument of imposing the domination of a power group or some power groups within the political arena.

Moreover, wining the political power means also winning economic strength or the ability to build networks... As Charles Tilly analyzed, the concept „war making" has a strong relation with the „profit making"[12]. The Turkish case shows bluntly how some of Tilly's analyses remain accurate in the context of many war situations at the end of the XXth century: in Turkey, in fact, the political networks and military factions are formed and reproduced by and through violence, the successive counter-insurgency theories or „low intensity doctrines" allowing them to mobilize a nationalist symbolism and to legitimize their positions within the power structures. The analysis of the so-called „Uniformed Gangs" which emerged during 1980s and 1990s shows that billions of dollars engendered by the war play a decisive role in these processes of net-work building and reinforcement, militarizing thus almost entirely the power relations in the country[13]. These economically and politically disastrous policies have been adopted in Turkey during 1990s, in a large part because they were the only ones which could offer economic advantages to some of those networks and legitimize them as the necessary price for the country's security. During these years, the competition among the military and security factions for the economic resources, namely the drug trafficking and the black market,

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9 Those founding elements are, as they were put by Ziya Gökalp: 'turcification', 'islamisation' and 'westernisation'.

10 E. Gellner: *Muslim Society*, Cambridge, 1981.

11 H. Bozarslan: „ Ethnicity, solidarity networks and violence in Contemporary Turkey", Occasional papers of The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 1999; V. Özdemir: *TBMM Susurluk Arastirma Komisyonu Ifade Tutanaklari*, Istanbul, 1997; V. Özdemir: *TBMM Tutanaklari. Susurluk Belgeleri, TBMM Komisyon Raporu'na Muhalefet Serhleri ile Birlikte*, Istanbul, 1997.

12 Ch. Tilly: „War making and State Making as Organised crime", in: P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer & T. Skocpol (eds): *Bringing the State Back in*, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 169-191.

13 Bozarslan, Ethnicity, solidarity networks and violence in Contemporary Turkey, op. cit.

gave also birth to „privatized" forms of violence[14], including blood feuds and Mafia kind social organizations. Those forms of violence could articulate themselves with the power structures, founding official protection. The States organs used the actors of the „privatized violence" as death-squadrons in the Kurdish areas. Those actors, in turn, used the State as their immunity shield.

Historical Processes: The Regime and Its „Enemies"

These power structures and their legitimization under the label of Kemalism and „security", explain largely the violence linked to the Kurdish question in Turkey. But, this phenomenon has also other aspects that one could only understand by putting the evolution of the Kurdish question in a wider historical perspective.

In this perspective, I will leave aside the historical patterns of rebellion, which, as I explained it at the beginning of this article, were admitted by the Ottomans as a part of a tacit contract between the ruler and the „subjects". It seems, however, necessary to explain here that the Kurds were among the „privileged" subjects of the Sultan during the Ottoman period, in the sense that were part of the dominant Muslim majority. As such, the Kurdish group was perceived by the non-Muslim minorities as the de facto prolongation of the center. This peculiar situation explains largely the reasons of the late emergence of the Kurdish nationalism and the anti-Armenian alliance between the Kurds and the State between 1914-1923.

However, this status changed dramatically after the foundation of the Republic in 1923 and the installation of the „Single Party Rule" in 1925. In a radically transformed political framework, the „new regime" aimed to transform Turkey to a nation-state, and, as a consequence, it considered minorities as an obstacle to its projects of homogenizing the country, through imposing a „national" language and creating an uniformed culture. The Kurds, formerly a part of the dominant Muslim majority, were hitherto transformed into a minority without obtaining a juridical status offering them some rights[15]. The second consequence of degradation of the status of the Kurds was the following: the new-born Kemalist regime considered the social organization of Kurdistan as a challenge for the „national sovereignty", aiming thus to dismantle the tribes and the religious brotherhood which impregnated it.

These measures provoked a series of revolts that, in contrast of what was familiar in the past, the State did not (and, given its doctrinal premises, could not) manage as a part of a non-written contract between the center and the peripheries. The „revolt" or even the „contest" was hitherto considered as a „betrayal" to the „Nation"[16], requiring a heavy military response, if not a „war for ideal" or an „internal war of independence" as the Kemalists defined it[17].

More than seven decades after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, and in spite of brutal repression of the Kurdish revolts, one should admit that the Kemalist elite's project of building a „homogenized" Nation-State, governed from above, has failed. In fact, quite the contrary has occurred: in the wake of the urbanization and social movements of 1960s and 1970s, a new Kurdish political, social and cultural space has emerged and rapidly imposed itself as a major component of the country. In Turkey of the 1990s, a majority of the Kurds define their „Kurdishness" as their decisive identity land-mark and, as it is testified by repeated opinion-pools, their belonging to a distinct group is also largely admitted by the majority of the Turks. The answer of the constitution, the official discourse and attitude of the central power to this sociological reality, however, remain unchanged: the Kurds are still defined as a non-group, or simply as Turks. The major concession that the State has made during 1990s was, following the surveys of P. Andrews[18] - and very much unofficially - to recognize them as one of 47 allegedly existing ethnic groups composing the country's population. Each of these groups, among them Kurds, are still required to adopt the Turcity, not in ethnic terms, but hitherto, as a „supra-ethnic" cultural and political, but still Turkish, identity. In other words, in this new formulation of the State's doctrine, the Kurds are, once again, offered precisely what the Kurdish nationalism and, broadly speaking, the „Kurdish space" in Turkey have always refused. Questioning the founding principles of the State – and this „concession" that the State „conceded"- is considered per se as a betrayal and „separatism"[19], leading to juridical sanctions.

Coercion

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14 See for this concept M. Wieviorka: „Le nouveau paradigme de la violence", in: *Cultures et Conflits*, no. 27-28, 1997.

15 Compared to the situation of the religious minorities of the past, the absence of „juridical status" was a farther unfavorable element to the Kurds, see H. Bozarslan: „Kurds: States, Marginality and Security", in: S. Nolutshungu (ed): *Margins of Insecurity. The International Security of Minorities*, Rochester, 1996, pp. 99-130.

16 As Gh. Salamé resumes it for the states: „Contesting meant 'leaving', leaving, meant betraying". Gh. Salamé: „Où sont donc les démocrates", in: Gh. Salamé (ed): *Démocraties sans démocrates. Politiques d'ouverture dans le monde arabe et islamique*, Paris, 1994, p. 23.

17 Atatürk on the repression of the Cheikh Said rebellion in 1925, quoted by T. Z. Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasi Partiler*, Istanbul, 1952, p. 169, and military report on the repression of the Dersim rebellion (1936-1938), quoted by F. Bulut, in: *Belgelerle Dersim Raporlari*, Istanbul, 1991, p. 233.

18 P. Andrews (ed): *Ethnic Groups in Turkey*, Wiesbaden, 1989. Andrews is of course not responsible of the way in which the Turkish authorities or politicians use his book.

19 One of the charges retained by Coskun Kirca, president of Parliamentary Commission that asked for the lift of the parliamentary immunity of the Kurdish deputies in 1994 was their refusal to admit the following motto of Mustafa Kemal: „happy the person who defines himself as Turk". See the „Acts" of the GNAT, meetings of March 2 and 3 (chaired by M. Kalemli).

In other words, Turkey tackles a highly amplified politically, socially and culturally „Kurdish reality" with an anachronical doctrine of „Unitarian State", understood as a State of one-nation and one-language[20]. As the renewed Kurdish nationalist mobilizations testifies since many decades, the „official doctrine" to „convince" the Kurds that „they were Turks" and the ideological and educational campaigns linked to it failed, leaving no other choice to the state then to adopt the classical rules of management of the „ethnic conflict" (or another major conflict). The first of these rules is the resource-allocation. It aims to create a category of the Kurdish „most-favored lords" - as The „Village Guards" counting about 100.000 men or completely militarized autonomous tribal structures - and to integrate them in the application of states' repressive policies. The second of these rules is the coercion - and its ultimate forms like the destruction of countryside or towns or the mass-assassination of Kurdish intellectuals.

From the State's perspective, both instruments are useful, but they are, also, at the some time, dangerous: the „village guards", for instance, which profit from the „resource-allocation", can maintain their privileges only thanks to the war. They openly threaten the state that they would „serve another master" if they should be „abandoned"[21]. Their loyalty can, thus, only be obtained through the war, i.e., through the existence of a Kurdish military protagonist. As far as the second rule, the „coercion" is concerned, it obviously allows the State to „face" the „Kurdish threat" by attacking to its „roots" or its „heads" or its „symbols" that are in competition with those of the „Unitarian State" („Kurdish flag" and its colors, „Kurdish national song", Kurdish historiography, symbols as the „Kurdish martyrs" as Sheik Said or Seyyid Riza, other elements of the collective memory...). However, the non-recognition of the cultural rights and symbolic resources as legitimate resources to which a group is entitled, and, the denial of a distinct administrative status, provoke, in turn, a violent response of some segments of the population within the economically marginalised urban youth. In fact, one should admit that neither Turkey, nor Turkish Kurdistan, are non-sociological spaces. Therefor, the more the demands of the integration of the Kurdish political and social space to the Turkish political arena, on the condition of the recognition of its specificity, is rejected by the power, the more its actors are pushed to the clandestine modes of action, or, to violence. The PKK's violence and is popularity among some parts of the Kurdish population is largely a product of the State's coercion, of the impossibility of conducting a legal opposition and of the feeling that there is „no other way out".

These elements allow us to return to our above-mentioned paradox of the „Turkish democracy": it is able to integrate some political actors, and, it functions, at the some time, as a system of exclusion, producing, thus, much more political and civil violence than many other Middle-Eastern countries. One should also add that, although the Kurdish question has been the main source of violence in Turkey for the last 15 years, it is in no way the only one (one should also mention the political violence linked to the conflict among the radical left and the radical right; the sectarian, more and more „ethnicised" violence, linked to the Alevi question, and the possibility of an islamist violence).

One can, therefore, suggest that, on the contrary of some well-spread opinions, violence is not an automatic consequence of ethnic differentiation or even of nationalist claims or of „terrorist actions". Violence is a consequence of the power relations, the impossibility of questioning and changing mechanisms of national and political domination and subordination by other means than violence.

2. The structures of the Kurdish movement

The obstacles that the Kurdish movement faces should also be considered among the structural reasons of the violence, which dominates the Kurdish question in Turkey. Among these obstacles, one should naturally mention the „genealogy" of the modern Kurdish movements in Turkey and elsewhere in the Middle East. Those movements emerged during 1970s, partly as a revival of Kurdish nationalism, and partly in the wake and of the Middle Eastern - namely Turkish - radical left movements and as a part of them. They were influenced, not to say mentally bounded, more by the symbols of the radical left than the leftist thoughts as such. Since their emergence, they have in fact been impregnated by mottoes such as „Party discipline", „leadership", „armed struggle", „revolutionary justice and violence". One of the reasons why this kind of motto could exert such an influence on the Kurdish movements, was that they were, de facto, a part of the common vocabulary of the Middle Eastern power culture. With major exception of Iran, the States' discourses and school handbooks largely spread the above mentioned motto.

One can easily understand that the Kurdish movements emerged as pupils of the existing State model in the Middle East. Responding to the State meant for them to reproduce their symbols of power by Kurdifying them, to oppose their Turkish or Iraqi counterparts by producing a Kurdish „leader", a Kurdish „flag", a Kurdish „national aim". As a

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20 Ibid.

21 Kamil Atak: „Silahi Kim Verirse Ona Hizmet Ederiz", in: *Hürriyet*, 17 Dec 1996. Atak is member of the MHP (Nationalist Action Party, radical-right), head of the Village Guards, mayor of Cizre.

consequence of this „learning processes" from the „States", these symbols finally appeared to be more than simple symbols : during the following decades, they also become elements of internal cohesion, of group building.

Authoritarian regimes usually give birth to authoritarian oppositions. The Kurdish movements, whose history is marked by internal fights, „liquidations" of „internal enemies", or „Cults of the Leader" are not an exception. This genealogy explains largely why they could -as the states concerned by the Kurdish question- survive the changes in the world of 1980s and 1990s without changing their discourses and without in any way democratizing their internal rule. Additionally, it explains why they use violent means of contest also in order to assure their legitimization inside the Kurdish political arena, to perpetuate themselves by establishing a military discipline to their members, to build the Kurdish „nationhood" throughout the „imposition", military mobilization and recruitment of civil populations. A military Kurdish movement acts generally as a would-be-state, trying to appropriate the principal symbols of sovereignty that defines a state.

It is obvious, for instance, that while fighting the state, the PKK has, with much harsher means than other Kurdish movements, tried to impose itself as the Kurdish leadership in Turkey. In order to achieve this goal, it has transformed, more than any other Kurdish organization before it, the cult of the „Supreme Leader" into a taboo, that of martyrdom and of „purificatory" violence into a ritual. It is also obvious that these practices constitute the means of „institutionalization"[22] of the organization and the establishment of its control over the Kurdish population. From the perspective of the Kurdish actors, thus, the war does not only oppose what is perceived as an adequate answer to power, nor is it only a policy legitimized solely by the Kurdish nationalism and its premises. It also structures the Kurdish society, produces the power structures within the Kurdish movement and the Kurdish society. Through resource allocation, careers, social and political ascension, mechanisms of hierarchy, it creates new elites, whose political culture is deeply rooted within the armed struggle and whose future depend to a large extent on it.

A further element that produces violence is the following: conceiving itself as a would-be-state means facing quite similar constraints as the States face. For instance, as the „centrality" of the State, i.e., its pretensions and projects of controlling an entire country by a central power, the „centrality" of the Kurdish movement is also challenged by the centrifugal forces, by different allegiances (linguistic or sectarian loyalties, tribal ties that can provoke an alliance between the state and, a segment of the Kurdish populations, modern solidarity networks, groups led by local „commanders").

It would be beyond the scope of this article to dwell on the impact of these centrifugal elements on the overall spread of violence in Kurdistan - assassination of civil persons, revival of blood-feuds among tribes, emergence of new solidarity networks within the political and military apparatus etc.. One example will nonetheless allow us to understand the limits of a central organ to control „the field of violence": in 1993, the decision to kill unarmed Turkish soldiers - the act that finished the cease-fire period, unilaterally proclaimed by A. Öcalan, PKK's chairman - was not made by the party leadership, but by Semdin Sakik, one of its local commander. This decision had a direct link with the internal conflicts of the PKK. This example demonstrates how the process of violent contest can become autonomous from the agenda and will of a political and/or military leaderships. As is testified by this example, the „reproduction" of violence is also a means of „managing" the internal conflicts of the Kurdish political arena, or of imposing oneself in this arena.

However, it would be difficult to understand the evolution of the Kurdish movement only by looking at its intellectual or organizational origins, by the political culture it shares with the states or it inherits from them or, by its social constraints or internal power relations. In fact, as I have already suggested, the Kurdish radicalism was, and still is, largely a product of the States' coercion. States' coercion and Kurdish violent responses are complementary elements of policy making and control of political space. They contribute together to form a collective memory. By all these aspects, they structure and codify the Kurdish conflict, establish the modes of action of the states and the Kurdish actors[23]. They determine largely the patterns of the relations between the Kurds and the States, and in some cases, between the Kurds and the other groups as we observe throughout inter-communautarian relations in Turkey.

Like many other radicalisms, the Kurdish radicalism, not either, can be presented as the absolute opposite of the pragmatism. Radicalism, as political pragmatism, are not ontological categories explainable by „essence"; they are results of social and political constraints and are determined by the political processes, negotiations and conflicts that the actors face. The actors are submitted to the constraints of what the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu would call the recognition of a „field" by the outside and the internal „effects of the field" (effets du champ). As I already mentioned, the Kurdish political arena is in no way an a-sociological field. A pragmatic attitude of an actor who would be ready to make concessions without obtaining, in turn, some symbolic and political advantages would be perceived as betrayal by different components of the field. Conceding to making such concessions would only give birth to new vague of radicalism and violence at the cost of actors who accepted to make them.

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[22] Ch. Tilly: *From Mobilization to Revol.ution*, New York, McGraw-Hill Companies, 1978, p. 201.

[23] On the notion of structuration wich I use here, see V. Jabri: *Discourse on Violence. Conflict Analysis Reconsidered*, Manchester, 1996.

The fear of the Kurdish movement of loosing ground, if it should move from radicalism to pragmatism, without obtaining some concrete concession in turn, is in no way hypothetical. This situation explains, partly at least, the failure of the Kurdish movement to imagine and to develop pragmatic solutions, to substitute a civil resistance to violent means of action. It also explains the limits of the Kurdish politicians who were, or still are, a part of the HEP/DEP and HADEP or other legal Kurdish political parties. A „reconciling" PKK risks to face the same constraints. In fact, the grass-root radicalism, which has constituted the main element of the Kurdish movement during 1980s and 1990s, will remain a decisive factor for the reproduction of violence, unless a radical change within the state's policy occurs.

3. Regional factors of violence

The final element that the researchers should take into consideration, is linked to the regional constraints. In fact, the evolution of the Kurdish question in Turkey is not determined only by the domestic politics, but also, by the character of the Kurdish question as a regional, Near-Eastern question, by the Iranian, Syrian and Iraqi domestic and foreign policies, as well as the regional tensions between those states. It is not within the scope of this paper to analyze the nature of the Kurdish question in each of these countries, or their policy towards the Kurdish question as a regional question. It is, however, necessary to keep in mind one historical fact, which has a fundamental impact on the issue of violence. Together with Turkey, these countries opted, from 1920s to almost the end of 1970s, for a collective repression of Kurdish movements. In other words, they combined an internal coercion with a collective repression against the Kurdish movement on the regional level[24]. Since two decades, however, as a consequence of the Iranian revolution and the Iran-Iraq war, the Syrian-Turkish and Syrian-Iraqi tensions, these States have abandoned this policy: while still managing the Kurdish question mainly through the coercion internally, they opted for the instrumentalisation and manipulation of the Kurdish movement against the neighboring states at the regional level.

This shift from the policy of the „collective security of the states"' to an open (as in Iran-Iraq War) or a latent (as Turco-Syrian, Iraqi-Syrian tensions) situation of conflict brings both handicaps and considerable advantages for the Kurdish movements in all four countries. Handicaps, because often they are condemned to be instrumentalized by different regional powers and they owe their success and their regional maneuver field less to their real social strength and their own achievements then to the calculations of the regional powers. As a consequence, as the Kurdish history of the last two decades shows, they might be obliged to fight as „mercenaries" against the Kurdish movements from the other countries. Still, one should also mention the advantages, because the durability of the Kurdish movements depends, hitherto, on the alliances they have with the regional states. Which explains why, compared to the past, where, with the major exception of the Barzani rebellion (1961-1975) the Kurdish armed-struggles were intense, but still short-lived experiences, the Kurdish movements of the last two decades appear to be durable and strong movements.

That is also the case in Turkish Kurdistan. While the longest of the Kurdish armed struggles in the Turkey of the 1920s and the 1930s lasted only three years, the PKK as an organization could lead a guerrilla warfare, which has been continuing since 15 years. As I suggested above, the domestic reasons (namely cycle of coercion and violence) is the main reason of this durability: as a matter of fact, at least until 1993, the violence exerted by the PKK was seen, by many young Kurds, as a policy responding to their own feelings of vengeance, and, thanks to their support, the PKK could determine the political agenda of the Turkish Kurdistan. But the regional alliances, the transformation of the regionally obtained resources into resources used in the Kurdish and Turkish political arena, constitute another key-element of the PKK's success, providing it with logistic and financial support and ensuring the protection of its leadership. It is obvious that these alliances pushed Öcalan's organization into a dead-lock situation namely in the Iraqi Kurdistan where it conducted a severe fratricide war with the Iraqi PDK more on the behalf of regional powers than of its own, but on the other hand, these alliances allowed the PKK as an organization, to insure its durability, facilitating to it to impose itself as the major actor of the Kurdish political arena Turkey.

Conclusions

I have tried to present some elements of understanding the violence in the Turkish part of Kurdistan in this paper. It is obvious that one should also take into consideration some other criteria – such as the physiological and economical environment, „conflict between generations", economic competition, local dynamics, „war economy" - to picture this phenomena more comprehensively. It is also obvious that, in the Kurdish political arena as elsewhere, violence is not a generic concept that one could apply to any situation whenever violent behavior is observed. It is, thus, necessary to use the tillyien concept of „repertoires" to understand the different forms violence can take or the different purposes that it may have.

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24 The Iranian aid to the Barzani rebellion during the first years of 1970s is an exception to this policy of defending „status quo".

While being confident that future research will allow us a better understanding of this phenomenon, it appears to me that the main reason for violence, - not why it emerges and reproduces itself but why it becomes so overwhelmingly dominant or even popular -, is to be sought in the narrowness of the Turkish political system, in the non-recognition of identities and symbolic resources as legitimate resources, in the insistence of the State to monopolize them on the behalf of the entire society, and in the central power's „crisis management" through coercion.

Undoubtedly, violence will remain a decisive factor of the Kurdish and Turkish political arenas in a foreseeable future. It is, however, in no way a fatality. The measures such as the legalization of the Kurdish parties as fully legitimate parties of the Turkish political life and the recognition of the Kurdishness as a legitimate allegiance (in opposition to the state-imposed loyalty to the Turkishness) would certainly be the first steps, allowing the move-back from the violent modes of action to the pacific ones[25].

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[25] G. Gürbey: „The development of the Kurdish Nationalism Movement in Turkey since the 1980´s", in: Olson, Kurdish Nationalist Movement, op. cit.Also Ö. Laciner: *Kürt Sorunu. Heniüz Vakit Varken*, Istanbul, 1991.